Disabilities are an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives.

The concept of human rights for persons with disabilities began to become more accepted internationally during 1970s. The Declaration on the Rights of persons with disabilities Persons, adopted by the General Assembly on 9th December 1975, encouraged National and International protection of the rights of the persons with disabilities. Recognition was given to the fact that persons with disabilities were entitled to the same political and civil rights as others, including measures necessary to enable them to become self-sufficient.

The declaration reiterated the rights of persons with disabilities to education, medical services, and placement service. It further recognized their rights to economic and social security, to employment, to live with their families, to participate in social and creative events, to be protected against all exploitation, abuse or degrading behavior, and to avail themselves of legal aid. The challenges of integrating and including persons with disabilities in the economic mainstream has not been met. Despite international standards and the implementation of exemplary training and employment legislation, policies and practices in some countries, persons with disabilities, and especially women, youth and those in rural areas, remain disproportionately undereducated, untrained, unemployed, underemployed and poor "Well, in India, the major problem is that of awareness. Or rather, the lack of it. There's also a kind of stigma associated with them, which is disgusting. There are laws that state that no school for 'normal children can refuse admission to persons with disabilities ones, however, it is rarely followed; most schools do refuse admission to such children. All these factors lead to

just one result: these children do not receive the education they deserve, the education that their peers receive.

“Over 600 million people, or approximately 10 per cent of the world’s population, have a disability of one form or another. Over two thirds of them live in developing countries. Only 2 per cent of persons with disabilities children in the developing countries receives education or being rehabilitation. The link between disability, poverty and social exclusion is direct and strong throughout the world” – Human Rights and Disability (United Nations).

During ancient times, the birth of persons with disabilities were seen as the result of sin or punishment by God for wrong thing done in last life. This perception has changed over a period of time and persons with disabilities were looked at with pity and charity. But today despite the sensory or physically disabilities they proves themselves as normal citizens. It has been proved that disability lies in the social system and not within persons with disabilities themselves. They need protection of their rights and equal opportunities instead of showing pity and getting charity. Disability movement both worldwide and within India has a greater role to play in this transformation. The movement has to be strengthen further. Study focuses on the changing face of disability movement from looking at persons with disabilities as a sin to charity mode and towards giving them their rights and equal opportunities. Attempt here is on understand the path of disability movement and its relevance for Indian social work. This will provide an important input for voluntary organizations, government, and the social work professionals working in the area of disability.

In everywhere in the world, persons with disabilities are the largest minority group starved of services and facilities available to their non- persons with disabilities counterparts. As a result they are least nourished, least healthy, least educated and least employed. They are subject to the long history of neglect, isolation, poverty, deprivation, charity and pity. The situation of persons with disabilities in India is not significantly different. The responsibility of care of persons with disabilities is generally left to their

families and few institutions managed by government voluntary organisations. Persons with disabilities in India are mostly ignored by the society because they do not have economic, political or media power. Census of India, for the first time, enumerated persons with disabilities in 2001 according to which more than two crore people are facing the problem of disability. In comparison to United Nations figure of ten percent, this figure is very small. The reason lies in the different approaches and definitions. Within India results of National Sample Survey Organisation and Census of India shows contradictory results. This speaks about the lack of sensitivity on the issue of disability.

The legal framework adequately addresses the issue of disability. Constitution of India, guarantees right of justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief and worship and equality of status and of opportunities for all citizens including person with disabilities. Apart from constitutional provisions, the collective struggle and continues attempts of all persons with disabilities and their advocates resulted in 'Persons with Disabilities (Equal opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Bill, passed in 1995. This Act is a comprehensive and far reaching legislation with promise of liberating mankind of its prejudices and of removing barriers that have crippled the persons with disabilities for centuries. By granting full equality, independence and freedom, act has opened doors to people with disabilities so that they can become an integral part of the mainstream society. Apart from PWD Act, we have other legislative provisions like The Mental Health Act 1987, Rehabilitation Council of India Act 1992, and The National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act 1999.These Acts are also intended to safeguard the interest of person with Disabilities. Government of Gujarat has passed Gujarat Physically Handicapped Persons (Employment in Factories) Act 1982 which provide for the reservation for person with disabilities in private sector factories. The fruits of these legislative provisions are not percolating to persons with disabilities because of lack of awareness. Even voluntary organizations working for persons with disabilities are not aware about the legal provisions available to protect the rights in various aspects.

The policies and schemes of government are guided by medical model rather than human rights model. Major efforts on the part of government are limited to physical rehabilitation in the form of preventive action, provision for aids and appliances etc. Efforts in the direction of human rights model has remain on paper because of the ignorance on the part of persons with disabilities, and voluntary organization.

Kerala, is a tiny state in the southernmost part of India.. Kerala, with appreciative development indicators comparable to developed countries, has been experimenting with decentralization and participatory local democracy, ultimately aimed at realization of the constitutional goal of establishing genuine "institutions of local self government" since the enactment of Kerala Panchayat Raj Act & The Kerala Municipality Act in the year 1994.

Local governments were vested with the powers and responsibilities of economic development and social justice in their respective areas. Panchayats and the Municipalities altogether constitute the Local Government System of Kerala state in the Indian federal system.

**Statement of the problem**

The present study attempts to the awareness of local body secretaries about the laws for disabled and disability. It also tries to examine the attitude of local body secretaries towards disabled and implementation of laws and funds in local body level .So the present study entitled as "**A Study on the awareness and attitude of local body secretaries on disability and implementation of laws and funds for the disabled in Kerala".**

**Operational definitions**

**Awareness**

In this study awareness denotes knowledge of local body secretaries about disability their welfare, laws and funds for persons with disabilities .

**Attitude**

A combination of concepts verbal information and emotions that result in predisposition to respond favourably or unfavourably towards particular people,groups,ideas,events or objects .In this study attitude denotes the feelings and opinions of local body secretaries towards disabilities.

**Local body secretaries**

In this study localbody secretaries refers to the qualified persons appointed as secretaries by the appropriate authorities in Panchayath, Municipality, and Corporation in kerala.

**Disability**

It refers as inabilities or limitations in performing roles and tasks expected of an individual with in a social environment due to sensory or physical impairments.

**Implementation of laws**

The local bodies consider and implement the laws like Persons with Disabilities Act 1995, The Mental Health Act 1987, Rehabilitation Council of India Act 1992, The National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act 1999 . By these laws, local bodies should provide education, shelter ,least restricts environment etc. to the persons with disabilities.

**Implementation of funds**

It is the budget allotment of the local bodies for the welfare of persons with disabilities in the respective current financial year.

**Objectives of the study**

1. To identify the level of awareness of local body secretaries in kerala on disability.
2. To identify awareness level of local body secretaries on disability with respect to certain socio demographic variables.
3. To determine attitude of local body secretaries towards persons with disabilities.
4. To determine attitude of local body secretaries towards persons with disabilities with respect to certain socio demographic variables.
5. To identify the extent of implementation of laws for persons with disabilities in local body levels.
6. To identify the extent of implementation of funds for persons with disabilities in local body levels.
7. To identify the extent of the relationship between awareness and attitude of localbody secretaries on disability.
8. To find out the relationship between awareness of localbody secretaries and implementation of laws in the local bodies on disability.
9. To find out the relationship between attitude and implementation of laws of localbody secretaries on disability.
10. To analyze the nature and extent of the utilization of funds for persons with disabilities in localbodies from 2007-08 to 2011-2012 financial years.

**Hypotheses of the study**

The following research hypotheses were formulated for the study.

1. There will be no significant relationship between the awareness and attitude of local body secretaries on disability.
2. There will be no significant relationship between the awareness and implementation of laws on disability.

3. There will be no significant relationship between the attitude and implementation of laws on disability.
4. There will be no significant difference between the awareness level of local body secretaries with respect to selected socio demographic variables.
5. There will be no significant difference between the attitude of local body secretaries with respect to selected socio demographic variables.

**Methodology in brief**

Descriptive survey method is adopted for the study.The sample of the study consists of 300 local body secretaries from panchayath,municipality and corporations in kerala state.Random sampling method is used to select the sample.The standardized tools used are: 1. Disability Awareness Inventory for Local body Secretaries and 2. Scale of Attitude towards Disability for Local body Secretaries and 3.Disability Laws Implementation Inventory and 4. Disability funds utilization inventory

The data collected using these tools were analyzed using the following statistical techniques.

a) Computation of frequencies, percentages, arithmetic mean, median, mode and standard deviation
b) Coefficients of skewness and kurtosis
c) The student's t-test
d) 0ne-way analysis of variance
e) The test of least significant difference for post hoc comparisons
f) Karl pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation

**Major findings**

The major findings that have emerged from the present investigation are given below in separate titles.

**Analysis of awareness of local body secretaries on disability**

The awareness of local body secretaries on disability were found to be at a high (14.43). Most of the local body secretaries have (62.3%) high awareness and 19.7% of local body secretaries have average awareness and 17.7% have very high awareness and 0.3% have low awareness about disability.

Karl pearson's product-moment coefficient of correlation revealed a significant high positive correlation ($r = 0.622$, $p<0.01$) between awareness and attitude of local body secretaries on disability and significant low positive correlation ($r=0.158, p<0.01$) between awareness and implementation of laws.

**Awareness of local body secretaries on disability with respect to certain socio-demographic variables**

Type of local body was not a significant factor in the awareness of local body secretaries ($F=0.081, df=2; p>0.05$).Years of experience in job in local body($F=I.913, df=2; p>0.05$) and years of experience as secretary in local body($F=0.124, df=2; p>0.05$) were not found as significant factors in the awareness of local body secretaries. Education of local body secretaries emerged as a significant predictor in awareness of local body secretaries ($F=6.370$, $df=2$; $p<0.01$). Age of local body secretaries was not found to be significant variable in awareness of local body secretaries ($F=1.606, df=2; p>0.05$).

Gender was not a significant predictor of awareness of local body secretaries about disability($t=0.874; p>0.05$).Locality of residence was not a significant predictor of awareness of local body secretaries about disability ($t=0.730$; $p>0.05$).

Religion of local body secretaries emerged as a significant factor influencing awareness of local body secretaries ($F=14.634, df=2; p<0.01$). Highest mean value was obtained by the Christian group and lowest mean value was obtained by the Muslim group. The mean differences of Christian-Hindu groups and Christian-Muslim groups were found to be significant at 0.01 level. Christian community local body secretaries have more awareness than

Hindu and Muslim community local body secretaries. Family members with persons with disabilities was a significant factor that influences awareness of local body secretaries about disability ($t=4.49;p>0.01$).

**Analysis of Attitude of local body secretaries towards disability**

The attitude of local body secretaries towards disability were found to be highly positive. Karl pearson's product-moment coefficient of correlation revealed a significant high positive correlation ($r = 0.622$, $p<0.01$) between awareness and attitude of local body secretaries on disability.

**Attitude of local body secretaries towards disability with respect to certain socio-demographic variables**

Type of local body was not a significant factor in the attitude of local body secretaries ($F=0.038$, $df=2;p>0.05$).Years of experience in job in local body($F=0.471$, $df=2$; $p>0.05$) and years of experience as secretary in local body($F=0.174$, $df=2$; $p>0.05$) were not found to be significant factor in the attitude of local body secretaries. Education of local body secretaries emerged as a significant predictor of attitude of local body secretaries ($F=6.496$, $df=2$; $p<0.01$)..Age of local body secretaries was not a significant variable in attitude of local body secretaries ($F=2.55,df=2;p>0.05$).

Gender was not a significant predictor of attitude of local body secretaries towards disability($t=0.494$; $p>0.05$). Locality of residence was not a significant predictor of attitude of local body secretaries towards disability ($t=0.862$; $p>0.05$).

Religion of local body secretaries emerged as a significant factor influencing attitude of local body secretaries ($F=5.373,df=2;p<0.01$). Highest mean value was obtained by the Christian group and lowest mean value was obtained by the Muslim group. The mean differences of Christian-Hindu groups and Christian-Muslim groups were found to be significant at 0.05 level. Christian community local body secretaries have more attitude than Hindu and Muslim community local body secretaries towards disability. Family members with persons with disabilities was a significant factor that

influences attitude of local body secretaries towards disability ($t=10.855;p<0.01$).

**Analysis of implementation of laws for persons with disabilities in local body**

The implementation of laws for persons with disabilities in local bodies were found to be low level (5.59).Most of the local bodies (87.3%) having only low and 10% of local bodies have average level and 2.7 % have high level in implementation of laws for disability in local body.

Karl Pearson's product-moment coefficient of correlation revealed a significant low positive correlation ($r = 0.158, p<0.01$)between awareness and implementation of laws.

**Analysis of utilization of funds for disability from 2007-08 financial year to 2011-2012 year**

The fund utilization of local body for disability in 2007-08 financial year were found to be at low level). Only 16.3% local bodies were not at all utilized the funds for disability. Only 3.3% local bodies were fully utilized the funds for disability.

The fund utilization of local body for disability in 2008-09 financial year were found to be at average level).Only 9.7% local bodies were not utilized the funds for disability. Only 2.7 % local bodies were fully utilized the funds for disability.

The fund utilization of local body for disability in 2000-10 financial year were found to be at average level). Only 6.3% local bodies were not utilized the funds for disability. Only3 % local bodies were fully utilized the funds for disability.

The fund utilization of local body for disability in 2010-11 financial year were found to be at average level. Only 8.3% local bodies were not utilized the funds for disability. Only 2.7% local bodies were fully utilized the funds for disability.

The fund utilization of local body for disability in 2011-12 financial year were found to be at average level. Only 10% local bodies were not utilized the funds for disability. Only 2.7% local bodies were fully utilized the funds for disability.

**Implications and suggestions**

1. 20% local body secretaries have low and average level of awareness about disability. So that these panchayaths cannot effectively implement the welfare program for persons with disabilities. The governments should initiate awareness programmes for local body secretaries about persisting laws and the running programmes for persons with disabilities. Usually the government is conducting orientation and refreshing programmes for local body employees. In that programme, authorities can include items focusis to orient the participant regarding acts,rules,rights,budget allocation projects concern for persons with disabilities.
2. High level of awareness and attitude towards disability can enhances the effective implementation of the laws and programmes for the persons with disabilities. Implementation of laws is very important factor in the quality of life of the persons with disabilities. Study shows that, awareness automatically increases the ability of implementation of laws is also increases. So government should initiate orientation programmes for local body secretaries for increasing the level of awareness and also should keep in mind that those who are already well aware about the programmes can provide follow up programmes. In addition to that they can establish monitoring cell for the supervisions of improvements in the field of disability.
3. Education is a significant factor in the degree of awareness and attitude of local body secretaries. The government had fixed criteria for the selection of local body secretaries that is, those who are graduate can apply for the post. So we cannot do nothing with the criteria for the selection of local body secretaries. But those who are below postgraduate can increase their knowledge of disability through reading journals, magazines and books related with disability. The authority can arrange

these magazines in the library. So they can easily access and utilizes the same and authorities can fix minimum one hour in a week for the library reference.

4. Christian community has high awareness and attitude in compare with other communities. Historically Christian missionaries were involved with different charity programmes for the persons with disabilities. In the church also the Christian people can get more opportunities to participate in different charity and welfare programmes. People from other community do not get these type opportunities compared with Christian communities. So we can make aware of other religious leaders and the community to conduct welfare programmes and also government make necessary step to create aware about the importance of charity among people through media, social network sites and books. To create a good attitude towards charity in the mind of younger generation government can initiate necessary changes in the curriculum of school and college level.

5. The study shows that 87% of the local bodies in kerala are very poor in implementing the law and welfare programmes for the persons with disabilities. Most of the local body secretaries are well aware about the various aspects of disability but they are not shows interest in implementing the laws like installation of auditory signals at red lights in the public roads for the benefit of persons with visual impairment, causing curb cuts and slope to be made in pavements for the easy access of wheel chair users, ramps in public buildings ,hospitals, primary health centers, medical care and other rehabilitation institutions. These are all provided in the laws, but these laws stated as “shall with in the limits of economic capacity and development”. The local bodies are sometimes careless in implementing the law because of one point in the law such as shall within limits of their economic capacity and development. Instead of the word ‘shall’ it would be change as ‘must’, then the law can implement in a better way. The building should construct in least restricts way such as building up of ramps ,elevators, toilets…etc. when a public building is

to be constructed by should a local body, the local body secretaries are ensure least restrict environment and suitable infrastructure facilities for the persons with disabilities. The authorities take the advantage of loopholes in the laws related with disability. So the law should be amended. The laws stated in every clause such as 'shall' implement and it should be amended as 'must 'implement.

6. The study shows that in the financial years 2007-2012 the local bodies of Kerala are utilized only upto 50 % of the allocated fund for the persons with disabilities. Local bodies are the primary responsible authorities for the welfare of the downtrodden mass in a local body level. It is revealed from the study that 50% of the allotted fund has not been spend by the local body secretaries further it is more surprising that some of the local bodies even not spend a single paise for the benefit of the persons with disabilities. Hence how it is possible to dream the welfare of the downtrodden mass and persons with disabilities. Based on these it is suggested that the responsible authorities not spending money which was earmarked for the welfare of persons with disabilities should be punished. So as the allotted fund can be utilized and as a result welfare of the persons with disabilities can be ensured upto a limit.

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